## UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

	)
MASAKO MORISHITA,	)
715 6th Street NW, Apt 302	)
Washington, D.C. 20001	)
	)
Plaintiff,	)
	)
V.	) Case No. 1:19-cv-1266
WHICELED II C	)
WHISTLER, LLC,	)
d/b/a MOMO YAKITORI	)
2214 Rhode Island Avenue, N.E.	) JURY TRIAL DEMANDED
Washington, D.C. 20018	)
	)
Serve:	)
Andrew James Chiou	)
2214 Rhode Island Avenue, N.E.	)
Washington, D.C. 20018	)
	)
ANDREW JAMES CHIOU,	)
1215 11 <sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Number 1	)
Washington, D.C. 20001	)
_	)
Serve:	)
Andrew James Chiou	)
2214 Rhode Island Avenue, N.E.	)
Washington, D.C. 20018	)
	)
Defendants.	)
	)

#### **COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES**

Plaintiff, MASAKO MORISHITA (hereinafter "Ms. Morishita" or "Plaintiff") by and through counsel, Eric L. Siegel of Kalbian Hagerty, LLP, and hereby brings this action against WHISTLER, LLC d/b/a Momo Yakitori (hereinafter "Employer") and ANDREW JAMES CHIOU (hereinafter "Defendant Chiou") (hereinafter collectively referred to as "Defendants") to recover for unpaid wages and damages under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended

(the "FLSA"), 29 U.S.C. § 201 *et seq*, the District of Columbia Collection and Payment of Wages Law ("DCCPWL"), D.C. Code § 32-1301 *et seq*., the District of Columbia Minimum Wages Law ("DCMWL"), D.C. Coe § 32-1001 *et seq*., and for unjust enrichment, and for cause states:

#### **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

- 1. This Court has federal question jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 29 U.S.C. § 216(b).
- 2. This Court has supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff's state law collection and payment of wages claim and minimum wage law claim pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a) because those claims arise from a common set of operative facts and are so related to the claims in the action within the original jurisdiction of this Court that they form part of the same case or controversy.
- 3. Venue is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) because a substantial part of the events giving rise to Plaintiff's claims occurred in the District of Columbia.

#### **PARTIES**

- 4. Plaintiff Masako Morishita resides at 715 6th Street NW, Apt 302, Washington, D.C. 20001 and worked at all relevant times for Defendants, Whistler, LLC and Chiou, at their principal place of business located at 2214 Rhode Island Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20018.
- 5. Defendant Whistler, LLC is a District of Columbia limited liability company and operates as a restaurant business that is in good standing, with its premises located at 2214 Rhode Island Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20018.
- Defendant Andrew James Chiou resides at 1215 11<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Number 1, Washington,
   D.C. 20001 and serves as President and owner of Whistler, LLC. At all relevant times, he

- and Defendant Whistler, LLC were Plaintiff's employer.
- 7. From January 21, 2018 to January 20, 2019, Defendants employed the Plaintiff, and, at all times relevant to this action, condoned, ratified, authorized, and/or engaged in the customs, practices, policies, and wrongful acts described in this Complaint through their agents and/or employees.
- 8. At all times relevant to this action, the Defendants were responsible for keeping and maintaining all employment records relating to Plaintiff or caused such records to be kept or maintained.
- 9. At all times relevant to this action, one or both of the Defendants were engaged in commerce within the meaning of the FLSA by providing Japanese restaurant services to patrons in the District of Columbia.
- 10. At all times relevant to this action, one or both of the Defendants were "employers" within the meaning of the FLSA, the DCMWL and the DCCPWL.
- 11. At all times relevant to this action, Plaintiff was an "employee" within the meaning of the FLSA, the DCMWL and the DCCPWL and was not exempt from the FLSA's maximum hour provisions.
- 12. At all times relevant to this action, one or both of the Defendants "employed" Plaintiff within the meaning of the FLSA.
- 13. At all times relevant to this action, one or both of the Defendants were aware that they were legally required to pay Plaintiff the federal and District of Columbia minimum wages for all hours worked.

#### **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

- 14. Throughout 2017, Plaintiff Masako Morishita and Defendant Chiou planned and engaged in various tasks to open and operate Momo Yakitori restaurant in Northeast Washington, D.C.
- 15. Thereafter, Ms. Morishita was hired by the Defendants on or about January 20, 2018 to serve as its cook, cashier, and waiter and to perform other tasks within the restaurant, whether assigned or not, to grow the restaurant from its inception through January 2019.
- 16. Ms. Morishita performed her restaurant duties day in and day out, performing whatever tasks were required to service customers and grow the business. She worked in the Momo Yakitori restaurant from January 21, 2018 through January 20, 2019, when her relationship with Defendant Chiou and the restaurant was terminated.
- 17. While she was not required to keep track of her hours because the Employer did not keep time records, in violation of D.C. law, she did so through Uber receipts and other documents. Ms. Morishita typically worked between 5 to 10 hours per day, 6 days per week during the time that she worked for the Employer.
- 18. Ms. Morishita worked many overtime hours over 40 hours per week to assist Defendant Chiou in growing the restaurant business and serving customers.
- 19. From January 21, 2018 through January 20, 2019, Defendants failed to pay Ms. Morishita for her hours worked, whether regular or overtime, as well as minimum wages under D.C. law. Specifically, Defendants failed to pay Ms. Morishita \$12.50/hour for the period from January 21, 2018 through June 30, 2018 and \$13.25/hour for the period from July 1, 2018 through January 20, 2019, for a total of \$20,615.89 in minimum wages owed under District of Columbia and federal law.

- 20. In addition, Defendants agreed to reimburse Ms. Morishita for her transportation costs to and from the restaurant from her residence, given her vital role as a trusted worker to help get the restaurant running and operating to full capacity. Those transportation expenses amounted to \$3,029.62.
- 21. For the period from January 21, 2018 through January 20, 2018, Ms. Morishita was not paid *any* wages in exchange for her work performance, let alone minimum wages under federal and District of Columbia law.
- 22. Despite multiple requests, including later requests by her legal counsel, the Defendants never paid the wages owed to Ms. Morishita.
- 23. At all times relevant to this action, the Defendants were responsible for keeping and maintaining all employment records relating to Ms. Morishita or cause such records to be kept or maintained.
- 24. Upon information and belief, the Defendants have failed to keep contemporaneous, accurate time records for Ms. Morishita's work hours, pursuant to the requirements of the FLSA.
- 25. Defendant Chiou has recently asserted in April 2019 as an alleged offset to the wages owed to Ms. Morishita that he provided "consulting", "culinary", "event" and "event management" services to help her start and grow a catering business.
- 26. Defendant Chiou alleges that those services referenced in paragraph 25 were performed during the period from January 20, 2016 and August 22, 2017.
- 27. At no time prior to April 2019 did Defendant Chiou ever state to Ms. Morishita, either orally or in writing, that he was charging her for services referenced in Paragraph 25 above.

- 28. Moreover, upon information and belief, some of the alleged services performed by Mr. Chiou referenced in Paragraph 25 above were paid directly by the given client. Accordingly, Ms. Morishita would not be required to also pay Mr. Chiou for such alleged services.
- 29. At no time prior to April 2019 did Defendant Chiou ever present Ms. Morishita with invoices for services referenced in Paragraph 25 above.
- 30. Defendant Chiou did not create and/or prepare any invoices for services referenced in Paragraph 25 above contemporaneous with providing those alleged services.
- 31. Upon information and belief, Defendant Chiou created and/or prepared invoices for services referenced in Paragraph 25 in or around April 2019.
- 32. In addition, Ms. Morishita purchased groceries and other supplies and items for the benefit of the restaurant and Defendants based on Mr. Chiou's promise that he or Defendant Whistler, LLC would pay her back.
- 33. In all, Ms. Morishita spent \$1,055.39 for such groceries, supplies and other items for the benefit of the restaurant.
- 34. Contrary to his promises, Defendants never paid Ms. Morishita back the \$1,055.39 she spent for the benefit of the restaurant operations.
- 35. All conditions precedent for the filing of this lawsuit have been satisfied.

#### COUNT I FLSA MINIMUM WAGE VIOLATION

- 36. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 35 as if fully set forth herein.
- 37. Each of the Defendants is an "employer" within the scope of the FLSA.

- 38. Plaintiff was the Defendants' "employee" within the meaning of the FLSA.
- 39. Plaintiff was a "non-exempt" employee of the Defendants within the meaning of the FLSA.
- 40. At all relevant times, the FLSA required the Defendants to pay Plaintiff at least the minimum wage per hour during her employment in an amount of \$20,615.89.
- 41. The Defendants violated the FLSA by knowingly failing to pay Plaintiff at least the minimum wage per hour, in violation of 29 U.S.C. § 206(a)(1)(C).
- 42. The Defendants' violations of the FLSA's minimum wage requirements were repeated, willful, and intentional.
- 43. The Defendants are liable to Plaintiff for, among other damages, her unpaid minimum wages, liquidated damages, and costs and reasonable attorneys' fees incurred in the maintenance of this action pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 216(b).

#### COUNT II VIOLATION OF THE DCMWL

- 44. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 43 as if fully set forth herein.
- 45. Each of the Defendants is an "employer" within the meaning of the DCMWL.
- 46. An employer shall pay each employee at least a minimum wage specified in the statute for hours of work performed, and failure to do so is a violation of D.C. law. D.C. Code § 32-1010(a)(1).
- 47. Ms. Morishita worked for Defendants from January 21, 2018 through January 20, 2019, when her employment was abruptly terminated.
- 48. Failure to pay Ms. Morishita all of her wages owed subjects the Employer to payment of the minimum wages owed and mandatory treble damages, absent a showing of good faith.

- D.C. Code § 32-1012(b)(1).
- 49. Ms. Morishita is owed \$20,615.89 in unpaid minimum wages for the period from January 21, 2018 through January 20, 2019.
- 50. Ms. Morishita is entitled to liquidated damages (treble damages) in the amount of \$61,847.67 for Defendant's failure to pay the minimum wages owed.
- 51. Defendants did not act in good faith by failing to pay Ms. Morishita minimum wages owed and did not have reasonable grounds that its failure to pay was not a violation of the statute.
- 52. Defendants have violated the minimum wages statute by not posting the required postings in the workplace pertaining to payment of minimum wages under District of Columbia law.
- 53. Defendants have violated the minimum wages statute by not keeping proper wage and hour records as required by District of Columbia law.
- 54. Defendants' violations for failing to post and keep proper wage and hour records subjects

  Defendants to penalties including fines and/or imprisonment.
- 55. Ms. Morishita is entitled to be paid all reasonable attorneys' fees, interest and costs that she has incurred, and must incur going forward, to vindicate her rights under the statute.

#### COUNT III VIOLATION OF THE DCCWPL

- 56. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 55 as if fully set forth herein.
- 57. Each of the Defendants is an "employer" within the meaning of the DCCPWL.
- 58. "An employer *shall* pay all wages earned to his or her employees on regular paydays designated in advance by the employer and at least twice during each calendar month," with the exception of administrative staff, such as an office manager, who may be paid

- once per month." D.C. Code § 32-1302 (emphasis added).
- 59. D.C. law also provides that upon the termination of an employee's employment, she must be paid all wages owed within four (4) days of her separation date. D.C. Code §32-1303(1).
- 60. Defendant owes Plaintiff wages in the total amount of \$20,615.89.
- 61. Failure to pay Ms. Morishita all of her wages owed subjects the Employer to mandatory treble damages. D.C. Code § 32-1303(4).
- 62. Under the DCCWPL, Defendants' failure to pay Plaintiff her wages owed requires that Defendants pay treble damages in the amount of \$61,847.67.
- 63. In addition to damages owed, the District of Columbia issues statutory penalties for violations of the law. Given that Ms. Morishita has previously demanded payment of the wages owed to her, and Defendants have willfully either refused or ignored her requests, Defendants are subject to penalties for multiple violations in the amount of \$10,000.00 or imprisonment for not more than ninety (90) days. D.C. Code § 32-1307(a)(2).
- 64. Ms. Morishita is entitled to be paid all reasonable attorneys' fees and costs that she has incurred, and must incur going forward, to vindicate her rights under the statute, and it is mandatory. D.C. Code § 32-1308(a)(1)(A).
- 65. The DCCWPL expressly provides that Ms. Morishita may pursue attorney fees "computed pursuant to the matrix approved in *Salazar v. District of Columbia*, 123 F.Supp.2d 8 (D.D.C. 2000) and updated to account for the current market hourly rates for attorney's services. The court shall use the rates in effect at the time the determination is made." D.C. Code § 32-1308(b)(1).
- 66. The attorneys' fees which Ms. Morishita may pursue as part of her relief also include the fees associated with pursuing collection of any judgment received in Ms. Morishita's favor.

#### COUNT IV UNJUST ENRICHMENT

- 67. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 64 as if fully set forth herein.
- 68. Unjust enrichment occurs when (1) a plaintiff conferred a benefit on a defendant, (2) the defendant retained the benefit, and (3) under the circumstances, the defendant's retention of the benefit is unjust.
- 69. Plaintiff conferred a benefit on Defendants by paying \$1,055.39 for supplies, groceries and other items for the restaurant during the time that she either worked there or assisted in pursuing the concept for, and growing, the restaurant business.
- 70. In addition, by traveling to and working in the restaurant, Ms. Morishita conferred a benefit on Defendants by paying \$3,029.62 in transportation expenses to and from the restaurant from her residence.
- 71. Defendants promised to reimburse Ms. Morishita for those transportation expenses.
- 72. Defendants, or either of them, retained the benefits of Ms. Morishita's expenditures.
- 73. Under the circumstances, Defendants' retention of the benefit is unjust.
- 74. As a result of Defendants' unjust enrichment, Plaintiff has suffered damages in the amount of \$1,055.39 and \$3,029.62, respectively, requiring that Defendants disgorge and pay those expenditures back to Ms. Morishita.

#### PRAYER FOR RELIEF

**WHEREFORE** Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court:

A. Declare the Defendants' conduct to be a violation of the FLSA, the DCWML and the DCCWPL;

B. Declare Defendants to have been unjustly enriched by benefits conferred by Plaintiff;

C. Enjoin the Defendants to comply with all applicable federal and District of Columbia wage

laws;

D. Award to Plaintiff her unpaid minimum and overtime wages plus liquidated damages under

FLSA;

E. Award to Plaintiff her unpaid minimum wages plus treble damages under District of

Columbia law;

F. Award to Plaintiff her unpaid wages plus treble damages under District of Columbia law;

G. Award Plaintiff \$1,055.39 and \$3,029.62, respectively, for Defendants' unjust enrichment;

H. Award to Plaintiff her costs and reasonable attorneys' fees incurred in this action;

I. Award Plaintiff prejudgment and post-judgment interest as permitted by law; and

J. Grant such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

#### **JURY DEMAND**

Plaintiff demands a trial by jury.

Dated: May 1, 2019 Respectfully submitted,

KALBIAN HAGERTY, LLP

By /s/ Eric L. Siegel
Eric L. Siegel
Bar No. 427350
888 17<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Suite 1000
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 419-3296
esiegel@kalbianhagerty.com

Attorney for Plaintiff Masako Morishita

# Case 1:19-cv-01266-TJK Document 1-1 Filed 05/01/19 Page 1 of 2 CIVIL COVER SHEET

JS-44 (Rev. 6/17 DC)			DEFER	NITEC					
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS			DEFENDANTS						
MASAKO MORISHITA			WHISTER, LLC and ANDREW JAMES CHIOU						
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#### Case 1:19-cv-01266-TJK Document 1-1 Filed 05/01/19 Page 2 of 2

O G. Habeas Corpus/ 2255  □ 530 Habeas Corpus – General □ 510 Motion/Vacate Sentence □ 463 Habeas Corpus – Alien Detainee	O H. Employment Discrimination  442 Civil Rights – Employment (criteria: race, gender/sex, national origin, discrimination, disability, age, religion, retaliation)	O I. FOIA/Privacy Act  895 Freedom of Information Act 890 Other Statutory Actions (if Privacy Act)	J. Student Loan  152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loan (excluding veterans)			
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<ul> <li>■ K. Labor/ERISA (non-employment)</li> <li>■ 710 Fair Labor Standards Act</li> <li>■ 720 Labor/Mgmt. Relations</li> <li>■ 740 Labor Railway Act</li> <li>■ 751 Family and Medical Leave Act</li> <li>■ 790 Other Labor Litigation</li> <li>■ 791 Empl. Ret. Inc. Security Act</li> </ul>	L. Other Civil Rights (non-employment)  441 Voting (if not Voting Rights Act)  443 Housing/Accommodations  440 Other Civil Rights  445 Americans w/Disabilities – Employment  446 Americans w/Disabilities – Other  448 Education	M. Contract  110 Insurance 120 Marine 130 Miller Act 140 Negotiable Instrument 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits 160 Stockholder's Suits 190 Other Contracts 195 Contract Product Liability 196 Franchise	N. Three-Judge Court  441 Civil Rights – Voting (if Voting Rights Act)			
V. ORIGIN						
O 1 Original Proceeding from State from Appellate or Reopened district (specify)  O 2 Removed O 3 Remanded O 4 Reinstated O 5 Transferred from another Litigation District Judge Litigation – Direct File Judge						
VI. CAUSE OF ACTION (CITE THE U.S. CIVIL STATUTE UNDER WHICH YOU ARE FILING AND WRITE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF CAUSE.) 29 U.S.C. Section 201 et seq. Suit for unpaid minimum wages, unpaid wages and unjust enrichment.						
VII. REQUESTED IN CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS DEMAND \$ 150000 Check YES only if demanded in complaint COMPLAINT JURY DEMAND: YES NO						
VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY	(See instruction) YES	NO If yes, p	lease complete related case form			
DATE: May 1, 2019	SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF REC	CORD /s/ Eric L	. Siegel			

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET JS-44 Authority for Civil Cover Sheet

The JS-44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and services of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. Listed below are tips for completing the civil cover sheet. These tips coincide with the Roman Numerals on the cover sheet.

- I. COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF/DEFENDANT (b) County of residence: Use 11001 to indicate plaintiff if resident of Washington, DC, 88888 if plaintiff is resident of United States but not Washington, DC, and 99999 if plaintiff is outside the United States.
- III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES: This section is completed <u>only</u> if diversity of citizenship was selected as the Basis of Jurisdiction under Section II.
- IV. CASE ASSIGNMENT AND NATURE OF SUIT: The assignment of a judge to your case will depend on the category you select that best represents the <u>primary</u> cause of action found in your complaint. You may select only <u>one</u> category. You <u>must</u> also select <u>one</u> corresponding nature of suit found under the category of the case.
- VI. CAUSE OF ACTION: Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing and write a brief statement of the primary cause.
- VIII. RELATED CASE(S), IF ANY: If you indicated that there is a related case, you must complete a related case form, which may be obtained from the Clerk's Office.

Because of the need for accurate and complete information, you should ensure the accuracy of the information provided prior to signing the form.

Date:

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT				
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I	District of			
Plaintiff(s) V.  Defendant(s)	) ) ) ) (Civil Action No. ) ) ) )			
	IN A CIVIL ACTION			
To: (Defendant's name and address)				
A lawsuit has been filed against you.				
are the United States or a United States agency, or an of P. 12 (a)(2) or (3) — you must serve on the plaintiff an	n you (not counting the day you received it) — or 60 days if you fficer or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of otion must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney,			
If you fail to respond, judgment by default will You also must file your answer or motion with the court	be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. t.			
	ANGELA D. CAESAR, CLERK OF COURT			

Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

AO 440 (Rev. 06/12) Summons in a Civil Action (Page 2)

Civil Action No.

#### PROOF OF SERVICE

(This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4 (l))

was rec	This summons for (no ceived by me on (date)	ume of individual and title, if an				
	☐ I personally served	d the summons on the indi	ividual at (place)			
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	on (date)	, and mailed a c	copy to the individual's last known address; or			
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	designated by law to	accept service of process	on behalf of (name of organization)			
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	My fees are \$	for travel and \$	for services, for a total of \$			
	I declare under penalty of perjury that this information is true.					
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Additional information regarding attempted service, etc:

Date:

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UNITED STATE	S DISTRICT COURT
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V.  Defendant(s)	CIVII Action No.
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SUMMONS II	N A CIVIL ACTION
To: (Defendant's name and address)	
A lawsuit has been filed against you.	
are the United States or a United States agency, or an off P. 12 (a)(2) or (3) — you must serve on the plaintiff an a	you (not counting the day you received it) — or 60 days if you ficer or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of tion must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney,
If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be You also must file your answer or motion with the court.	be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint.
	ANGELA D. CAESAR, CLERK OF COURT

Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

AO 440 (Rev. 06/12) Summons in a Civil Action (Page 2)

Civil Action No.

#### PROOF OF SERVICE

(This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4 (l))

	This summons for (nan	ne of individual and title, if any)					
was re	ceived by me on (date)	·					
	☐ I personally served	the summons on the individual	at (place)				
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	☐ I left the summons at the individual's residence or usual place of abode with (name)						
		, a perso	on of suitable age and discretion who re-	sides the	ere,		
	on (date)	, and mailed a copy to	the individual's last known address; or				
	☐ I served the summo	ons on (name of individual)			, who is		
	designated by law to a	accept service of process on beh	alf of (name of organization)				
			on (date)	; or			
	☐ I returned the sumn	mons unexecuted because			; or		
	☐ Other (specify):						
	My fees are \$	for travel and \$	for services, for a total of \$				
	I declare under penalty of perjury that this information is true.						
Date:							
			Server's signature				
			Printed name and title				
			Server's address				

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc: